



WATERLOO
Community School District

Engaged in Learning ● Prepared for Success

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WATERLOO SCHOOLS ANNOUNCE OFFICE OF ADVANCED LEARNING

WATERLOO – Superintendent Gary Norris today announced the formation of the Office of Advanced Learning for the Waterloo Schools. This Office will focus on further development and implementation of programs and services to identify and serve students who have advanced learning needs. Advanced learning programs are those which enrich and extend learning opportunities for students who are high performing, or who could be high performing with the right supports and programming.

Superintendent Norris notes that, “At a September 2010, Board meeting, I discussed the importance of increasing our expectations and announced the formation of a 21st Century Expanded Learning Task Force. I urged the public, at that time, to not be fooled that Iowa is producing the strongest graduates in the nation or that the United States is producing the strongest graduates in the World. Our concerns included:

1. Projected shortfalls of engineers and other technical experts in the U.S.
3. Proficiency on the ITBS/ITEDs means that a student is at the “41st percentile,” not an acceptable target for our young people.

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4. Long-term trends reveal Iowa's decline in reading and mathematics scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.
5. Forty-two percent of community college freshmen around the nation enroll in at least one remedial course.
5. The Iowa School Boards Foundation (ISBF) found that the top five performing states in the United States had significantly more rigorous standards than Iowa.
6. The United States is no longer the world leader in secondary education, according to the rankings of an international organization.

"I indicated that our Strategic Plan needed to place greater emphasis on rigorous curriculum and challenging instruction," continued Norris. We formed the 21st Century Expanded Learning Task Force (membership is at end of this document) to make sure we are doing all that we can do to meet students' advanced learning needs. The goals of this Task Force were:

1. To improve gifted programming for Waterloo students for all students
2. To increase the number of minority students in gifted programming
3. To investigate the feasibility of a middle level and/or high school level International Baccalaureate (IB) Program
4. To increase enrollment in advanced placement and concurrent credit courses (to allow students to enter college with university credits already earned)

In June 2011, the Task Force recommended that the District:

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1. Review the process for **identification of students** who could benefit from advanced/expanded learning options to focus on:
 - A. Educating parents about the process
 - B. Increasing the number of minorities in Expanded Learning by disaggregating the data by subgroup and creating action plans to address the gaps in program participation
 - C. Reviewing the identification process to ensure:
 - i. *Twice exceptional* (students who are both gifted and in special education) students are identified and served
 - ii. It is a comprehensive picture of a child's skills and talents
2. Explore additional **acceleration options**, including
 - A. On-line learning, as appropriate, for students in grades PK-12
 - B. Advanced course offerings, especially at the middle school
 - C. Identification and removal of barriers to accelerating students by course or by grade, especially barriers that exist between buildings (elementary to middle school, middle school to high school)
 - D. Development of end-of-course tests that are aligned to critical concepts of Iowa Core and allow students to "pass out" of already mastered content
- ii.3. Review **instructional delivery**
 - A. Provide daily instruction for gifted students with their ability-alike peers
 - i. From their gifted teacher as often as possible
 - i.a. elementary: preferably daily (but at a minimum weekly)
 - i.b. secondary: daily
 - ii. From their general education classroom (daily)

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- B. Provide **professional development** for all K-12 teachers in Differentiated Instruction and monitor its implementation—Improve the instructional delivery to include less review, faster pacing, compacted instruction, and problem-based learning options
 - C. Expand services (frequency, duration, quality) for identified K-2 students through talent development
- ii.4. Refine the **Instructional Decision Making process** for gifted learners
- a) Provide professional development for all PK-12 teachers and administrators in Differentiated Instruction and monitor its implementation
 - b) Ensure appropriate pre-testing is done consistently
 - c) Investigate methods of delivery of supplemental and intensive instruction for students who are proficient on the pre-test
- ii.5. Motivate students to enroll in **Advanced Placement, Post Secondary Enrollment Option, and Concurrent Credit** courses
- a) Consider weighting grades for advanced placement courses
 - b) Consider recognizing students at graduation
 - c) Increase communication to parents about options and connections to post-secondary goals, with an increased focus on middle school parents
- ii.6. Investigate **International Baccalaureate (IB)** programming
- a) Create a subgroup committee to explore International Baccalaureate, including a site visit to a successful IB school

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Additionally, following the Five Year Comprehensive Site Visit in spring of 2011, the Iowa Department of Education recommended that the District increase opportunities for advanced programming that will extend and enrich student learning. They further noted that minority students are underrepresented in Gifted Education. Minority students make up 41% of the Waterloo Schools population and only 20% of gifted programming enrollment.

In July 2011, Governor Branstad hosted the **Iowa Education Summit** and again highlighted the fact that Iowa had fallen to the middle of the pack in academic achievement. Unfortunately for Iowa students, a majority of his legislative proposals designed to return us again to a top position in the United States will not be realized in the 2012 Legislative Session. There continues to be gridlock between Democrats and Republicans; however, the Waterloo Schools will continue to move ahead with the initiatives that help us meet the learning needs of all students.

In January 2012, the District formed a sub-group of the 21st Century Expanded Learning Task Force to explore Advanced Learning Programs (membership is at end of this document) that would be highly attractive to parents and students, specifically focusing on the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program. The recommendations of the Advanced Learning Programs Committee are expected to be given to the Board within the next few weeks.

“We have made progress in addressing the 21st Century Task Force’s recommendations to meet the individual needs of students, but we still have a long way to go in meeting the needs of advanced learners,” Norris continued. “Consequently, to further underscore the necessity of challenging our higher performing students for global competition, I am announcing the

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formation of the Office of Advanced Learning in the Waterloo Community Schools. That office, housed under the Educational Services Division, will help coordinate all of our initiatives with our higher performing students.

“I have selected someone passionate about higher performing students to help lead these initiatives. Dr. Gail (Moon) Callahan will be a Principal in charge of Advanced Learning Programs in this Office. Dr. Callahan has had a distinguished leadership career in our district and is no stranger to advanced learning. Dr. Callahan taught Gifted and Talented Learners in our district for over 12 years. In addition she has served as a Principal at three of our buildings, spanning all three levels—elementary, middle, and high school.

“Dr. Callahan is known by many persons in our district and knows a great deal about our district as she has spent the bulk of her career in Waterloo. Further, she understands the urgency for our city, state, and country to significantly increase “rigor” for our students.

“It is time Waterloo and Cedar Valley students have programming options designed to ensure they are globally competitive and have immediate access to prestigious post-secondary institutions. It’s essential that employers in our area have access to a sufficient number of graduates who are prepared to succeed in the 21st Century.

“Dr. Callahan will ‘hit the ground running’ and work initially with our Advanced Learning Committee to begin implementation of their upcoming recommendations. The creation of this Office of Advanced Learning and the appointment of Dr. Callahan underscore the commitment

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we have to meeting the individual needs of all of our students. Extensive attention has been paid in the past to the needs of students who are low performing. We seek now to expand the opportunities that we offer to those who are high performing or who could be high performing with the right support and programming.

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2011-12 21st Century Expanded Learning Committee:

District Staff:	Debbie Lee, Jane Lindaman, Larry Martin, Mary Meier, Gary Norris,
Administrators:	Amber Dietz, Dede Fantroy, Gail Moon Callahan
Teachers:	Carol Boyce, Audrey Kimball, Sherice Ortman, Matt Tracy
Parents:	Dave Odekirk, Margaret Kaliban, Dwayne Price, Alice Shirey,
Students:	Olivia Hill (West), Emilie Shadle (East)
Community:	Lou Porter, Amy Wienands

2012 Advanced Learning Programs Committee

Administrators:	Willie Barney, Gail Callahan, Jane Lindaman, Stephanie Mohorne, Gary Norris
Teachers:	Ross Bauer, Carol Boyce, Jane Kemp-Ulfers, Krista Platte, Matt Tracy
Parents/Community:	Goli Buchanan, Shayla Denton, Mary Donegan-Ritter, Brenda Durbahn, Bruce & Tricia Jacobs, Dave Odekirk

About Waterloo Schools

Waterloo Schools, located within Black Hawk County, Iowa, provide a full range of educational services to students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12. Students attending Waterloo Schools are engaged in learning and prepared for success. The district prides itself on hiring quality educators, maintaining the latest educational resources, and ensuring a safe and healthy environment. Services include regular and enriched academic education, special education for students with special needs, career education, and numerous individualized programs such as specialized instruction for at-risk students and for limited-English-speaking students. Please visit our website at www.waterloo.k12.ia.us.